

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS

Necessary to School Reform

Richard Koch

Triplets of U.S. Educational Crisis

- 1) Poverty (Unequal Opportunity)
- 2) Diversity (Negative Handling of--)
- 3) Bad Assessments (Testing) *

What's Wrong With Standards and Tests?

- They are not what the smart countries are doing.
- They are not what will help our growing number of students in need.
- They are damaging to students and to the future of our democracy.

Smart Country – Finland:

- Focused on 21st century skills – problem-solving, creativity, independent learning, student reflection
- Eliminated state mandated testing system
- Eliminated “Tracking”
- Vaulted to the top of international rankings

--Darling-Hammond, (*Flat World*, 2010), p. 5

Troubled students need:

- High implementation of “small learning communities” and small classes
- Interdisciplinary teams focusing on improving learning



Needs, continued

- Non-threatening learning environment
- Caring staff that accepts responsibility for their learning
- School culture that encourages staff risk-taking

- Orfield, *Dropouts in America*, 2006, pp. 237, 245, 249

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

- 1) Food, Water, Sleep
 - 2) Safety
 - 3) Belonging, Love, Affection
 - 4) Esteem – worth and recognition
 - 5) Self Actualization
- (Toward a Psychology of Being)

Poverty/Hunger in U. S.

- 26.9% of Latino households struggle to put food on the table
- 35.7% of African American children live in poverty
- One in nine free/reduced lunch students are reached by Summer Food Program

--Bread for the World Institute/Children's Defense Fund

Ernest Morrell

“You must love the students, but that is not enough — you must engage them in work that allows them to express their love for others.”



- (Urban Sites Network, NWP, April 2011)

Damage from the Tests

- Lead to student “grade grubbing” — disdain for real learning
- Teachers who would . . . have deviated . . . to explore, to expose students to ideas of interest to them, to wonder, to analyze — now are constrained to stick to the prescribed material
- Destructive of curriculum alternatives to test prep

--Nell Noddings in Nichols/Berliner, *Collateral Damage*, 2007

Fundamental Error of Standards

- “Going Deep” is five times more valuable than coverage. If you learn to explore in depth, there is almost nothing you cannot cover.
- If you learn by coverage, you not only don’t know how to go deep – you also forget much of what you have covered.
- Standards, in their linear, list-like format, inevitably describe what must be covered.

--Richard Koch

Means Must Match the Ends

“I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek.”

--Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, 1963

The Truth About Assessments

“Assessments either promote and support healthy development or they interfere with it. The current high stakes tests and the pressured one-shot writing exams pretend to be drawing a picture of the student. But this picture leaves off the hands that could have been used to accomplish authentic tasks, and it leaves out the face that could have shown us the student’s personal needs and possibilities.”

--Koch, Schwartz-Peterson, *Portfolio Guidebook*, 2000

Criteria for Effective Assessment Functions

- Supports desired teaching practice
- Assists teachers and students in diagnostic decision-making
- Promotes learning
- Relates equitably to diverse learners

Criteria for Assessment Results:

- Provides consistent and clear evaluation results (reliability)
- Allows students an authentic (life-like) opportunity to perform tasks to be used for evaluation (validity)
- Communicates effectively to relevant stakeholders

Authentic Assessments

- 1) Observation Records (teacher and student)
 - *Primary Language Record*
- 2) Survey – students on learning
 - *In the Middle*, Nancie Atwell
- 3) Exhibitions – Project-Based Learning
 - *Horace's School*, TheodoreSizer
- 4) Portfolio Review – collected student work
 - *Portfolio Guidebook*, Koch/Schwartz-Petterson

Paul Diederich's Results

In 1974 Paul Diederich clarified through research that:

It is possible to achieve sufficient "rater reliability," with practice, looking at complete student writings generated over time.

Diederich's Rating Criteria:

General Merit

- Ideas
- Organization
- Wording
- Flavor

Mechanics

- Usage
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Handwriting

--*Measuring Growth in English*,
NCTE, 1974

Benefits: Portfolio Review

3-Year Study Shows:

1. It allows professional educators to assess and evaluate according to agreed upon goals.
2. It allows for examining authentic work.
3. Interpretation allows for reflecting on our teaching.
4. It creates beneficial teacher collaboration.

Benefits . . .

5. It increases student-writers' awareness of their own growth.
6. It allows educators to speak more credibly about what they and their students are achieving.

--*Portfolio Guidebook*,
Koch-Pettersen
(2000)

Why Portfolios?

Writing samples over time permit:

- 1) Showcasing the student's best work
- 2) Documenting the student's growth over time
- 3) Diagnosing the best "next writing steps" for the student
- 4) Diagnosing the strengths and weakness of our current teaching practice